**Relationship Topic** - Family First - Courtship & Parents hearwelldone.org

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| How do you honor your parents and yet obey what God is telling you to do in walking together?  How do you parent transitioning young adults, especially those in a relationship of God's leading?  What about Family First?  What does God say?  Some parents do great during the younger years in laying a solid foundation of "obeying Father and Mother, planting God's Word in their hearts, moral decision making, demonstrating humility, honoring others above themselves, forgiveness, serving others etc."   But young adults in transition to independence call for a **transition in parenting** as well.  Some parents struggle to make the adjustment.  I know we did.  This is especially a challenge when young adults are in a relationship of God's leading.  The perspective we are about to share from God's Word applies **only to young adults who have proven faithful to God** and are ready and successfully making the transition into adulthood.  This does not apply to young people **who have not** demonstrated a heart for God, faithfulness to Him or an ability to hear his voice and follow Him in the decisions of their life.  So be careful to **honestly and prayerfully assess** where you are, or if you are a parent (where your children are), to fully discern how this might apply in their lives.       Have you ever heard people quote scripture that really isn’t scripture?  For example.  “God helps those who help themselves.”   Sounds good, but it isn’t the Bible.  Here’s an even better one…  "Cleanliness is next to Godliness."  While not a bad practice, especially considering the alternative… This phrase is also not in the Bible.   Many families hold to the philosophy – **Family First or Family Comes First**.   What exactly does this mean?  Under what circumstance?  Does God agree?  What priority in our life should our family take?  Which Family?  Does this change in different seasons of our life?  What if a young adult is in a relationship of God's leading, but not quite fully independent.  How does this philosophy apply then?   What does God say?  The word “Family” occurs 76 times in the King James.  In every instance it pertained to identifying people groups, but none addressed the dynamics of interpersonal family relationships, or the prioritization of activities.     So what else does the Bible say regarding family?  Here are some thoughts that might challenge our thinking as parents of transitioning young adults, and young adults in a relationship that God may lead to marriage. |

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| Honor your Father & Mother & Obey Those in Authority  This is a clear unmistakable command in scripture for the people of God.    **Exodus 20:12** - Honor your father and mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD you God is giving you.  **Ephesians 6:1-8** - Children **obey your parents in the LORD**, for this is right.  Honor your father and mother which is the first commandment with a promise that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.  Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.  Slaves **obey your earthly masters** with respect and fear; and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.  Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.  Serve wholeheartedly as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for what he does, whether slave or free.   **Titus 3:1** - Remind the people to **be subject to rulers and authorities** to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate and to show true humility toward all men.  **Hebrews 13:17** - **Obey your leaders and submit to their authority**.  They keep watch over you as men who must give an account.  Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.   **Romans 13:1** - **Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities** for there is no authority except that which God has established.  The authorities that exist have been established by God.  Consequently he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.  For rulers hold no terror for those **who do right**, but for those who do wrong.  Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you.  For **he is God’s servant to do you good**.  But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing.   These verses give clear direction on how we should respond to authority, as followers of Christ.  But obedience to those in authority even parents, God always places second in priority to obeying God  (The LORD or the "Supreme Authority" in your life, your Heavenly Father - which includes following his plan for your life.)  **Ephesians 6:1** - Honor your Father and Mother – **in the LORD**  En:  in position with, within relation to (and giving yourself wholly to-first) the LORD – LORD:  Kurios:  Supremacy, the Supreme in authority.  The Controller. |

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| This means that all of our honor of those in authority is subject FIRST to honoring GOD, the LORD, the supreme in authority over all.   In other words, we honor those in authority at every instance, unless it goes against God, or against what God is clearly leading us to do to obey him.   **Example:** Jonathan did not obey his Father Saul who wanted him to divulge David's whereabouts.  Knowing Saul wanted to kill David, he dishonored his father’s wishes.  A blatant disobedience of his parent.   Jesus didn't obey the church leaders of his day who said God wouldn't want him to heal on the Sabbath.    Amram & Jocobed did not obey Pharoah's command.  Instead, they hid Moses in the bull rushes- until Pharoah's daughter found him and adopted him.  She also did not honor her Father’s wishes – which went against God’s plan.   Even Joab did not honor King David’s order to take a census of the fighting men – he didn’t count all the men.    **I Chronicles 21:1** - Satan rose up against Israel and incited David to take a census of Israel… But Joab replied, “May the LORD multiply his troops a hundred times over.  My lord the king, are they not all my lord’s subjects?  Why does my lord want to do this? Why should he bring guilt on Israel?  The king’s word however, overruled Joab, so Joab left and went throughout Israel and then came back to Jerusalem.  Joab reported the number of the fighting men to David:  In all Israel there were one million one hundred thousand men who could handle a sword, including four hundred and seventy thousand in Judah.  But **Joab did not** include Levi and Benjamin in the numbering, because the king’s command was repulsive to him.  This command was also evil in the sight of God; so he punished Israel.   **When the Sanhedrin commanded Peter** not to preach in this name, his humble respectful, and "God’s priority of submission" answer, was:  "We must obey God."   **Acts 5:29** - We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name.” he said. “Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood.”  Peter and the other apostles replied:  We must obey God rather than men!   So what do you do when your FAMILY comes against or between what GOD is telling you to do?    This might apply to choosing Jesus as your Savior – or doing what God is leading you and telling you to do in your life.   (If you’re 6 years old, this does not apply to you…) But if you are of age:  What do you do when God tells you to do something, or leads you to do something in your life that your parents do not agree with or fully agree with?   **First:  Be sure this is what God is telling you.**  Be fervent in prayer about this, God will confirm it by his Spirit in your spirit, and by his Word. |

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| **Second:**  **Appeal** to your Parents.  Tell them this is what I truly believe God is telling me to do and why.   Ask for them to support you in doing what God is telling you to do.   Then you can fully obey God with their full support.   **Third:**  **Get their counsel** – if they disagree, or have concerns - ask them why **they feel God is saying** differently. Are they seeking God on this? or hearing from God? or do they just have opinions?  If what they are saying is from God, scripture will support it, and the Holy Spirit will confirm it, and multiple Godly counselors will confirm it.  But recognize, once you get to a certain age, God is transitioning you and preparing you for independence from your parents, and dependence on Him!  **God will lead you and confirm through them**, not the other way around.  God will lead you by his Spirit, through prayer, and the Word of God, and will confirm your steps by each step of obedience you take.  He will also confirm through the counsel of others, but not lead you through others; He leads you by his Spirit.  This will happen for the rest of your life, and once you are married, in unity with your husband or wife.  **My command to my own children:** “Always obey your father!  \*Unless, what I’m telling you does not match what God is telling you.  **Be sure you are hearing Him**… but if it comes down to ME versus GOD.  My wishes, verses what He is telling you.   ALWAYS GO WITH GOD.  Your Heavenly Father trumps me every time.  As parents, our job is to train up our children **to hear from God themselves**.  And if we have done that, to **trust GOD in them**.  He is big enough to handle our kids.  If their hearts are truly seeking God, even though it doesn't match our preferences, God's calling to us as parents is to encourage them to follow what God is telling them.     What if God tells you to do something that goes against what your parents said or believe.   Will you?   **Judges 6:25** - That same night the LORD said to him, ‘Take the second bull from your father’s herd, the one seven years old.  Tear down your father’s alter to Baal and cut down the Asherah pole beside it.  Then build a proper kind of altar to the LORD your God on the top of this height. Using the wood of the Asherah pole that you cut down, offer the second bull as a burnt offering.  So Gideon took ten of his servants and did as the LORD told him.  But because he was afraid of his family and the men of the town, he did it at night rather than the daytime.  In the morning when the men of the town got up, there was Baal’s altar demolished, with the Asherah pole beside it cut down and the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar.  They asked each other, “Who did this?”  When they carefully investigated they were told, “Gideon, son of Joash did it.  Then the men of the town demanded of Joash.  “Bring out your son, he must die, because he has broken down Baal’s altar and cut down the Asherah pole beside it.  But Joash replied to the hostile crowd around him.  “Are you going to plead Baal’s cause?  Are you trying to save him?  Whoever fights for him shall be put to death by morning!  If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself when someone breaks down his altar.  So that day they called Gideon “Jerub-Baal. Saying, “Let Baal contend with him,” because he broke down Baal’s altar. |

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| So Gideon takes the second bull of his father's flock – **without asking permission**.  He cuts down his father's altar and Asherah pole.  Because what God told him to do was different from what His father had been doing.  But Gideon obeyed what God was telling him to do, no matter what the consequence.  What was the consequence? People came against him, **but God moved the heart of his father** and **revealed truth to him**.  What else was the consequence?  **Judges 6:33** - Now all the Midianites, Amalekites and other eastern peoples joined forces and crossed over the Jordan and camped in the Valley of Jezreel.  **Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Gideon**, and he blew a trumpet, summoning the Abiezrites to follow him.   Do you think that **the Spirit of the LORD** would ever have come on Gideon, **if he hadn’t first obeyed God in the Altar and Asherah pole issue?**   Would we ever have heard the story of the 300 lamps and trumpets – 300 soldiers who defeated an army that was without number!  Couldn’t be counted?    If Gideon had not obeyed when the LORD told him to do something that his parents did not agree with, would Israel ever have been saved?  **Yes, just not by Gideon**, God would have raised up someone else.   Would Goliath ever have been killed if David listened to his brothers who accused him of having evil in his heart -  just coming to watch the battle.  If he had gone back to the sheep like they said he should do…  Would Israel have ever been saved?   **Yes, God would have raised up another David**.    Rebekah also:  went against her mother’s preference to Obey what God was telling her to do. If she hadn’t, would she ever have become the second “1st lady” of God’s Chosen People?   **NO, but God would have raised up another Rebekah to take her place**.       Did God ever require someone to separate from their family?  Or did God always hold to “Family First” as a priority?   **God told Abram to leave his family.**  **Genesis 12:1,4** - The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. “… So Abram left, as the LORD had told him…   **God told Rebekah to leave her family.**   Genesis 24:43-59 - See, I am standing beside this spring; if a maiden comes out to draw water and I say to her, “Please let me drink a little water from your jar, and if she says to me to, Drink and I’ll draw water for your camels too,” let her be the one the LORD has chosen for my Master’s son.  Before I finished praying in my heart, Rebekah came out with her jar on her shoulder.  She went down to the spring and drew water and I said to her, “please give me a drink. She quickly lowered her jar from her shoulder and said, “Drink and I’ll water your camels too, So I drank, and she watered the camels also.  I asked her, “Whose daughter are you?  She said, The daughter of Bethuel son of Nahor, whom Milcah bore to him.  Then I put the ring in her nose and the bracelets on her arms, |

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| and I bowed down and worshipped the LORD.  I praised the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me on the right road to get the granddaughter of my master’s brother for his son.  Now if you will show kindness and faithfulness to my master, tell me; and if not, tell me, so I may know which way to turn.”  Laban and Bethuel answered, “**This is from the LORD, we can say nothing** to you one way or the other.  Here is Rebekah; take her and go, and let her become the wife of your master’s son, as the LORD has directed…  When they got up the next morning, he said, “Send me on my way to my master.”  But her brother and her mother replied, “Let the girl remain with us ten days or so; then you may go.”  But he said to them, Do not detain me, now that the LORD has granted success to my journey.  Send me on my way so I may go to my master.  Then they said, “**Let’s call the girl and ask her about it**.  So they called Rebekah and asked her, “Will you go with this man?   “**I will go,”** she said.   So they sent their sister Rebekah on her way, along with her nurse and Abraham’s servant with his men.    **God tells every husband and wife to leave their family and cleave to their spouse**.  This is God’s way of marriage. The start of a new family to which he eventually adds children.   **Genesis 2:18** - The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be **alone**, I will make a **helper** suitable for him (a help meet)     The word help – means **to surround, to aid, to help.**   God created the woman to always be fulfilled within the vision he has for the man.  Her husband will love and cherish and support her, but **her fulfillment will always be within his calling in life -** the calling God has for both of them.  **Genesis 2:24** - For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they will become one flesh.  Leave means to forsake, and cleave means to stick to (like Glue).  **Psalms 45:10** - Listen, O daughter, consider and give ear: Forget your people and your father’s house, The king is enthralled by your beauty; honor him, for he is your lord.    Jesus said, that there will be times when your family’s wishes may conflict with what I’m calling you to do.  Was Jesus against families and honoring parents?  No, but His purpose and will in your life – following him – trumps the desires or wishes or priority of your family – every time.    **Luke 14:25-27** - Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said:  “If anyone comes to me and **does not hate his father and mother**, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters – yes, even his own life- **he cannot be my disciple**.  And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. |

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| **Luke 12:48-53** - “ I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!  But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed.  Do you think I have come to bring peace on earth?  No, I tell you, but division.  From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three.  **They will be divided**, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against mother- in-law.   **Matthew 10:37** - Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.  Whoever finds his life will lose it and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.   **If you ask anyone, “Do you love your father and mother more than Jesus?**  They would say “Of course not!  - I love Jesus more”   But love for Jesus is **not a ‘saying thing’ its an ‘obeying thing.’**  Jesus said, If you love me, obey what I command, what I tell you to do.  (Even if it means, leaving your father and mother behind).  **Not everyone has Christian parents**, and **not all Christian parents seek the will of Christ** in every situation pertaining to their children, especially when they are transitioning into adulthood.  If your parents want you to do something **other than what God told you to do**, and you follow their opinion over God's, then you love your father and mother more than you love Jesus.   **Be careful,** if you have God fearing parents who love each other, are in unity with each other in what they are telling you in this matter; if they have always led you wisely and Biblically in God's will for you; if their track record is rarely if ever missing God, than you should **be very careful about going against their counsel**.   However, if they are non-believers or if they have demonstrated in the past at times a lack of spiritual discernment; or **if they are not living according to God's Word** in areas of their own life; **they will be susceptible to worldly wisdom rather than God's will for you**.  You need to be sure you are following what God is telling you to do, not their preferences.   Your faithfulness to God may in fact inspire them to seek and follow Him themselves in their own life.     "Take up your cross"… "Follow me" means... you may need to leave father and mother behind.  Jesus did, the disciples did, Abraham did, Rebekah did.  Rachel did, Gideon did, Samuel did, David did.     Jesus records examples of people who put family first above what He was telling them to do.  That made "Family First" their priority over God’s calling on their life, what he was leading them to do…  **Luke 9:59** - He said to another man, “Follow me.”  But the man replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my Father.”  Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” |

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| If there ever were a “**family first** excuse” this would be it.  We’re not just talking the tradition of thanksgiving dinner…  The death of your Father?  But Jesus never in scripture supported the theology of **Family First**…  His instruction was always - **God First**:  Do what God is calling you to do.   **God First** means do what He is telling you to do.  Not pray more, or sing more, or wait more, or delay more, go to church more, but Obey Immediately and Completely what He tells you to do.  When Jesus said,  "Follow me"  it meant **do what I’m leading you to do** – whether, marriage, ministry, whatever.    **Exodus 14:15** -  Moses, **why are you crying out to me**, tell the Israelites to **move forward**.  God was saying, "Moses stop praying, that's not putting me first.  Tell the Israelites to move forward.  **Do what I'm telling you to do.**"  That's what **God First** means:  Obey Immediately.  Completely.  **Stop praying, Start Obeying!**   If God has drawn you together, learn to live life together until he tells you to get married, or reveals he has a different plan for you.  Do not let family discourage you or dissuade you from doing what God is telling you. (If that is what He is telling you.)  Family wishes or traditions can never come above what God is telling you to do.   You live in your earthly father's house only a few years of your life, but your family (you and your spouse), that family is your priority for a lifetime.    Your Family that God begins with you and your husband, or wife, the family to which God will someday add children.  This is your family.   The priority of your husband or wife over your childhood family cannot start on your wedding day.  If it hasn’t been a priority before then, it will be a struggle after.  Forsake – leave your family.  **You cannot ever follow God if you won't**.  This may very well mean, Cleave, cling to the one God is drawing your heart to.  Doesn’t mean you have to move out of your house and move in with them.  Appeal to your parents to support you in obeying God in this.  But you - put God first, your spouse-to-be next, honoring your parents together, shifting the priority of your time and attention to your spouse to be, not family and friends, learning to walk together in obedience to Christ.   **Luke 9:61** - Still another said, I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say goodbye to my family.”  Jesus replied, “No one who puts hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”   Also a reasonable request, go back and say goodbye?  I can’t even do that?   Perhaps it was because Jesus knew that his mom would talk him out of it and he would end up not coming… whatever the reason.  **If you don’t quickly and completely obey what God is saying, you are not obeying.**  Delayed obedience is disobedience. |

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| **Family First – is never what Jesus taught**.  There is nowhere in scripture that God taught people to put their family as a priority over God’s calling or God’s instruction to do something in their life.  Which includes What God is telling you to do, or learning to be a wife who fears the Lord, or submitting yourself to the husband of God’s choosing, leaving your old life behind, and walking in the path he has chosen for you.  Obey First and continue obeying.  Even Abraham said to his servant, **if she won’t come**, don’t take Isaac back to my old family, or he might stay, and God told me that I and my children should receive this land – that He promised to give us.   Don’t let Isaac go back.      What about Jesus – He loved Mary his mother, and his family.   Did Jesus personally always put Family First?  **When Jesus’ parents left for home** and found him not in the traveling group.  They came back to Jerusalem looking for him.  After three days, they found their twelve year old in the temple talking with the teachers of the law.   **Luke 2:48-49** - When his parents saw him, they were astonished.  His mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us like this?  Your father and I have been anxiously searching for you.”  Why were you searching for me?"  He asked, "Didn’t you know I must be about my Father’s business?”      **Was Jesus dishonoring his parents?**  No, he was just obeying the prompting from his heavenly Father.  Sometimes this will appear as neglecting family, not putting family first, or even dishonoring parents.  But appearances like traditions can be deceiving.  Sometimes God’s leading can go against traditional norms or expectations, or parents’ preference or wishes.    Clearly, twelve-year old’s should rarely make travel plans apart from their parents.  But as children get older, as they become young adults, as they walk with God, and approach independence, there is a transition of leadership from parents direct dictates - to the Lord’s leading the young person directly.  The added benefit is confirmation from their parents.  This continues even after they leave home, with parents giving counsel rather than direct commands.  Each young adult is different, and matures in the LORD at a different pace and age, yet all must make this transition to following God first, and asking him to help them also honor their parents counsel… |

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| What about as an Adult?  Did Jesus always put family first?     **Matthew 12:46** - While Jesus was still talking to the crowd, his mother and brothers stood outside, wanting to speak to him.  Someone told him, “Your mother and brothers are standing outside, wanting to speak to you.”  He replied to him, “Who is my mother and who are my brothers?  Pointing to his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers.  For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.   **Does this sound like family first?**   Do you think this might have hurt his mother’s feelings, and do you think his brothers may have been offended?  Clearly this happened.  You would be if it happened to you!  **But Jesus never preached or practiced family first.**  He always preached obedience first.  He said obeyers  - these are my family -  he pointed to his disciples who had also left their families, their fishing nets, their tax collecting and doctoring businesses, to follow him.   They were obeyers who left family and careers behind to do what God was calling them to do.    **Matthew 19:26,28** - Peter answered him, “We have left everything to follow you!  What then will there be for us?  Jesus said to them… And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.  Walking with someone that God has drawn your heart to… does this count as ‘following Christ?’  **If that is what God is calling you to do – then it means you are following Christ**…  that's what following Christ is:  doing what God is telling you to do.   If God has drawn your heart to someone.  Does he want you walking together or separately?  **If separately then let each other go.** If He called you to walk together  - then do it - until he tells you differently.  **Guard Unity**.  Don’t let others speak against what God is calling you to do.  Appeal to your parents to allow you to do what God is telling you to do in this season.  And then, decide what you will do...   What will you obey?  God’s leading or family expectations?   What He is telling you, or what they prefer?  If He’s not telling you to walk together then don’t.  Don't fool yourself.  But if He is, then do it.  And **be an example to your family of what obedience to God looks like.**  **If your relationship is not Godly, or absolutely God’s leading,** this clearly doesn’t apply to you.  Your parents have valid concerns and you should heed them. |

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| But if your relationship is with a Godly young man who is leading you in Christ, or a Godly young woman who is committed to Christ and His calling in your life, and your parents’ priority really is you following Christ, then they will be supportive of you walking together and living a Godly relationship that God may lead to marriage.  They will trust God in you, and trust him to confirm or redirect you both.  If they have spiritual concerns, or even practical advice, **carefully consider their counsel**.  But if family opinions differ…  seek counsel, but be sure to follow what God is leading you (and your potential husband or wife-to-be).   Appeal to them to support you in doing what God is telling you to do.  While you are seeking God and trusting him to confirm, **do not let mere opinions** sway you.  Let the Holy Spirit lead you.  Pray, humble yourselves, seek counsel together, and **be absolutely sure that this is what God is saying**.  Then be sure you always obey the Lord over others' opinions.  **This aligns with all examples of scripture** regarding what God tells people to do – in spite of even well-intending opposition.  Are you encouraging young people to disobey their parents?  Never!  We are encouraging them to **seek God and to hear and fully obey** what He says.  **If God draws your heart to someone, walk with them from this day forward**, letting God confirm or redirect you.  Seek together a multitude of Godly counsel but also realize that part of growing up is leaving your family, cleaving to God, and eventually to the person he has called you to walk with in life.  The family God has for you!  **God decides the timing and his timing is perfect.**  He will never leave you or forsake you, he will lead you in the way that is **best for you,** in **the way you should go**, if you ask for wisdom, He will give it.     May God give you ears to hear, clear direction, a heart to obey quickly and completely, discernment, wisdom to guard unity, and the peace that passes all understanding. |

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